

**James Madison to Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch
Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, November,
1826. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,
1900-1910.**

TO MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE. MAD. MSS.

Montpellier, Novr, 1826.

Dear friend I received some days ago your letter of Augt. 28. If I did not invite an earlier one by my example it was because I often heard of you, and was unwilling to add a feather to the oppressive weight of correspondence which I well know to be your unavoidable lot. You will never doubt that your happiness is very dear to me; and I feel the sentiment growing stronger as the loss of others dear to us both shortens the list to which we belong. That which we have lately sustained at Monticello is irreparable; but was attended with every circumstance that could soothe us under it. I wish I was not obliged to add, "with one affecting exception." His family so long in the lap of all the best enjoyments of life, is threatened with the contrast of pinching poverty. The expences of his numerous household, his extensive hospitalities, and a series of short crops and low markets, to which are to be added old debts contracted in public service abroad and new ones for which private friendship had made him responsible; all these causes together, had produced a situation of which he seems not to have been fully aware, till it was brought home to his reflections by the calls of creditors, (themselves pressed by the difficulties of the times,) and by the impossibility of satisfying them without a complete sacrifice of his property, perhaps not even by that at such a crisis. In this posture of things, he acquiesced

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in an appeal to the Legislature for the privilege of a Lottery. This was granted, and arrangements made which promised relief, with a residuary competence for his beloved daughter & her children. The general sensation produced by the resort to a Lottery, and by the occasion for it, unfortunately led some of his most enthusiastic

admirers, to check the progress of the measure by attempting to substitute patriotic subscriptions, which they were so sanguine as to rely on till the sad event on the 4 of July, benumbed, as it ought not to have done, the generous experiment; with a like effect, which ought still less to have happened, on the Lottery itself. And it is now found that the subscriptions do not exceed ten or twelve thousand dollars, and the tickets, but a very inconsiderable number, whilst the debts are not much short of one hundred thousand dollars; an amount which a forced sale, under existing circumstances, of the whole estate, (*negroes* included,) would not perhaps reach. Faint hopes exist that renewed efforts may yet effectuate such a sale of tickets as may save something for the family; and fainter ones that the Legislature of the state may interpose a saving hand. God grant it! But we are all aware of the difficulties to be encountered there. I well know my dear Sir, the pain which this melancholy picture will give you, by what I feel at the necessity of presenting it. I have duly adverted to the generous hint as to the E. Florida location. But for any immediate purpose, it is, in any form whatever, a resource perfectly dormant, and must continue so too long for the purpose in question. Your allusion to it is nevertheless a proof of the goodness which dwells in your heart; and whenever known will be so regarded. The urgency of particular demands has induced the Executor Thomas Jefferson Randolph, who is the Legatee of the Manuscripts, to undertake an immediate publication of a Memoir, partly biographical, partly political and miscellaneous, left in the handwriting of his Grandfather, the proceeds of which he hopes will be of critical use; and if prompt & extensive opportunities be given for subscriptions, there may be no disappointment. The work will recommend itself not only by personal details interwoven into it, but by *Debates in Congress* on the *question of* Independence, and other very important subjects coeval with its Declaration, as the Debates were taken down and preserved by the illustrious

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member. The memoir will contain also very interesting views of the origin of the French Revolution, and its progress & phenomena, during his Diplomatic residence at Paris, with reflections on its tendencies & consequences. A trial will probably be made to secure the copyright of the publication, both in England and in France. In the latter case your friendly counsel will of course be resorted to and I mention it that you may in the mean time be turning the subject in your thoughts. The manuscripts of which the Memoir makes a part are great in extent, and doubtless rich in matter; and *discreet* extracts may perhaps prove a further pecuniary resource, from time to time, but how soon and in what degree, I have not the means of judging. Mrs. Randolph with her two youngest children, left Montpellier some days ago, on her way to pass the winter with Mrs. Coolidge. Such a change of scene had become essential to her health as well as to her feelings. She has made up her mind for the worst results; a merit which quickens the sympathy otherwise so intense. She was accompanied by her son, Ths. J. Randolph who will endeavor to make arrangements with the Northern Printers for the volume to be published. It will be an Octavo of about three hundred pages.

Your sketch of European prospects is valuable for its facts, & especially for its authenticity. The contents of the foreign Gazettes find their way to us thro' our own; but do not convey every thing as ours do to you. You will have seen the mortifying scenes produced in Congress by the Panama Mission. The fever of party spirit was an endemic which drew into it

every ill humour, till the whole body was infected. The malady however was far less malignant out of doors than within; and I hope our S. American friends will make allowances till a development of the real feelings here shall be seen. The Congress at Panama, after a partial execution of its business, has adjourned to Mexico. One of our envoys, Mr. Anderson died on his way there, and Mr. Sergeant the other is still here. Who is to be his associate in the place of Mr. A. is not known; nor is it known when he or they are to set out. Bolivar appears to have given a Constitution to the new State in Peru, of a countenance not altogether belonging to the American family. I have not yet seen its

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details; whether it shews him an apostate, or the people there, in his view, too benighted as yet for self-government, may possibly be a question.

Another mortifying topic is the Greek equipment at N. York. It appears the ample fund for two Frigates at an early day has procured but one which has but recently sailed. The indignation of the public is highly excited; and a regular investigation of the lamentable abuse is going on. In the mean time Greece is bleeding in consequence of it, as is every heart that sympathizes with her noble cause. You will see by our Gazettes also that the community is drawn into a premature ferment by the partisans of the Presidential Candidates, the actual incumbent, & Genl. Jackson in whose favor, all the opponents of the other are at present concentrating all their efforts. The race, according to appearances is likely to be a close one. But there is time enough for the political vicissitudes which often occur.

You possess, notwithstanding your distance, better information concerning Miss Wright and her experiment than we do here.¹ We learn only that she has chosen for it a remote spot in the western part of Tennessee, & has commenced her enterprise; but with what prospects we know not. I wrote to her without delay according to my purpose intimated to you, a letter of some length, in answer to one from her. Mrs. Madison wrote at the same time. I hope those letters, mine at least, reached her; not because it contained anything of much importance, but because it was dictated by the respect we feel for her fine genius and exalted benevolence. Her plan contemplated a provision for the expatriation of her Elèves, but without specifying it; from which I infer the difficulty felt in devising a satisfactory one. Could this part of the plan be ensured the other essential part, would come about of itself. Manumissions now more than keep pace with the outlets provided, and the increase of them is checked only by their remaining in the country. This obstacle removed and all others would yeild to the emancipating disposition. To say nothing of partial modes, what would be more simple, with the requisite grant of power to Congress, than to purchase all female infants at their birth, leaving them in the service of the holder to a reasonable age, on condition of their receiving an elementary education. The annual

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number of female births may be stated at twenty thousand, and the cost at less than one hundred dollars each, at the most; a sum which would not be felt by the nation, and be even within the compass of State resources. But no such

effort would be listened to, whilst the impression remains, and it seems to be indelible, that the two races cannot co-exist, both being free & equal.

1 She came to the United States in 1825 at Lafayette's suggestion.

The great sine qua non, therefore is some external asylum for the coloured race. In the mean time the taunts to which this misfortune exposes us in Europe are the more to be deplored, because it impairs the influence of our political example; tho' they come with an ill grace from the quarter most lavish of them, the quarter which obtruded the evil, and which has but lately become a penitent, under suspicious appearances. . . .